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ABSTRACT

Coherence and cohesion are fundamental considerations of the composing process that help to define the global and local components of textuality. Global text coherence centers on those aspects of the familiar rhetorical situation. Coherence operates at the paragraph and essay levels, answering questions about focus, tone, mode, topic, and thesis. Text cohesion reflects local textuality, and is created by ties and surface patterns. Operating at the sentence, clause, phrase, and word levels, cohesion reflects the grammar's potential for supplying usable utterances in discourse. Ties are horizontal-linear and include reference, substitution, ellipsis, conjunction, and lexis (semantic likeness or comparability). Surface patterns are evidences of text cohesion that are vertical-hierarchical and that achieve rhetorical ends by grammatical means. These patterns focus on the structuring and arrangement of language material and on how such structuring achieves the overall rhetorical purpose. The categories of cohesive surface patterns include hypotaxis (subordination), rhetorical structure, and punctuation (intonation). When all these elements of textuality are arranged in a classificatory diagram, they can be used by composition teachers to establish definitions of textuality so that problems arising at global and local levels may be dealt with systematically and understandably. (RL)

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Global and Local Textuality

I. INTRODUCTION

A major purpose of the composing process is for a writer to create a text to which a reader can apply both linguistic knowledge and experiential extra-linguistic knowledge in order to extract the meaning intended by the writer.

Meaning possesses several aspects. A linguistic grammar attempts to handle these aspects of meaning. Yet, one of the axioms of linguistic grammars is that they are primarily sentence grammars. And rightfully so. We filter out situational and discoursal context much the same as a chemist filters out most environmental factors by electing to work in a laboratory rather than in an open meadow. As native speakers of English, we make judgments of grammaticality about sentences. Consider Noam Chomsky's famous example, (1) on the second page of the Appendix. (All numbered examples are to be found in the Appendix.) (1) possesses lexical meaning: the words are real words. (1) possesses

morphological meaning: we can decompose colorless into the base color plus the derivational suffix -less; and ideas into the base idea plus the inflectional plural marker -s. (1) possesses syntactic meaning: the adjective-adjective-noun-verb-adverb arrangement is identical to the arrangement of the fully grammatical sentence token Hairless young baboons swing recklessly. But, (1) fails because it lacks propositional meaning: the semantic proposition expressed by (1) is non-sense.

A text, however, implies a context. A text further creates a context. Although (2) possesses grammatical meaning -- (2) can certainly be generated by the rules of a sentence grammar -- it lacks, in its isolation, discoursal meaning. To whom does she refer? To what action does did it refer? (2), further, lacks rhetorical meaning. What contextual motivation exists for the surface arrangement in (2)? What purpose is meant to be achieved by the use of (2)? And, (2) lacks functional meaning. What does (2) count as: an assertion? an accusation? a complaint? a boast? What pragmatic illocutionary act does (2) convey?

While we can realistically advance a sentence grammar which expresses our judgments of grammaticality about sentence tokens when divorced from context, we cannot -- at the moment -- realistically advance a text grammar. The best we can do is forward a text heuristic, non-rule-governed strategies for deciding textuality or 'text-ness' -- what is and what is not a text. We can make judgments of coherence and of cohesion about texts. A group of sentence tokens comprises a text if those sentence tokens exhibit textuality. Coherence and cohesion are fundamental

considerations of the process of composing a text. They are fundamental proofs that what is composed is, in fact, a com + position.

This paper seeks to define the global and local components of textuality. As a grammar is a set of rules which predict the grammaticality of sentences, so the text heuristic advanced here is a classificatory scheme to determine textuality.

II. TEXTUALITY

The diagram on the first page of the Appendix presents a text heuristic for examining textuality. Coherence is a global concern. It operates on the level of essay and paragraph, that level of language use beyond the sentence. Coherence is what a reader perceives in a text, globally. It is a reader-related phenomenon.

Global text coherence centers upon those aspects of the familiar rhetorical situation. Questions about focus ask if all parts of the text contribute meaningfully to the whole, whether assertions are supported adequately, or whether the text is perceived as being seen through a glass darkly, whether some segments of the text are irrelevant or queerly stationed. Questions about tone inquire if the writer's stance, as reflected in the text, is appropriate for both reader and subject matter, and further, whether it is consistently maintained or purposefully varied. Considerations of mode address the writer's selection of the most effective genre or manner of presentation, be it trans-

actional or expressive, narrative or expository, contrast of process. Questions about topic ask whether the subject matter is sufficiently limited in scope to a meaningful and handleable segment of experience. Questions about thesis regard the writer's purpose or intention, and ask if the point or points the writer is trying to get across is clearly stated, and hence clearly perceivable. Coherence is concerned then with those global, unifying, organizing principles that infuse and govern texts.

As examples of global coherence, consider (3) and (4) in the Appendix. Students in a college composition class, given these two short cloze exercises, unanimously agreed that (4) was much more meaningful than (3), and therefore, much easier to complete. The students could easily supply words to fashion grammatical sentences in (3), but they failed to see how each sentence was related to its fellow sentences by some sort of global linkage. Rightly so. (3) is a pseudo-paragraph composed of several sentences selected at random from different readings in Skwire and Chitwood (1978). (4), on the other hand, is the first paragraph from "The Essay of Comparison and Contrast," in Van Syoc and Van Syoc (1971).

On the last two pages of the Appendix, the entire composition, for which (4) is the initial paragraph, is reproduced. Note on the last page of the Appendix how this composition can be effectively blocked out on the global level. Block I, consisting of the first three paragraphs, introduces the topic and the thesis. Block II focuses on a comparison of literature, with one paragraph devoted to the Iranian poet, Firdausi, and the other to the English poet, Chaucer. Block III is stylistically more complicated,

zeroing in on a contrast of the activity level in the personal lives of both poets, and on a comparison of the similar ends of both poets' lives. Block IV, the conclusion, utilizes both contrast and comparison techniques.

It should be noted that "The Essay of Comparison and Contrast" exhibits coherence nakedly and overtly; it is part of a lesson in an advanced level ESL textbook.

As the diagram on page one of the Appendix indicates, text cohesion is effected by ties and surface patterns. Cohesion operates on the local level of the sentence, clause, phrase, and word. Cohesion is a text-related phenomenon. It reflects the grammar's potential for supplying utterances usable in discourse. (2), remember, is grammatical; its cohesive elements, although present, adhere to nothing. (2) forever awaits its discoursal context.

Halliday and Hasan (1976: p. 3) employ tie as "... a term to refer to a single instance of cohesion, a term for one occurrence of a pair of cohesively related items." Ties effect discoursal orientation, endophoric deixis; they are the grammar's method of establishing and reflecting discoursal context. Examples in the Appendix are drawn, for the most part, from Van Syoc and Van Syoc's "The Essay of Comparison and Contrast."

Reference employs pronouns, determiners (i.e., articles, demonstratives, genitives), and comparatives to show semantic identity of reference. Referential ties refer back (anaphorically) or ahead (cataphorically) to an identified antecedent without lexically repeating the item. See (5) in the Appendix.

Both substitution and ellipsis indicate structural sameness, but not semantic identity. Typical substitution items are one, the same for nominals, do for verbals, and so and not for clauses. (6) contains an example of a substitution tie. Ellipsis is in reality substitution by zero. "The Essay of Comparison and Contrast" is written in a formal register; it is not surprising that no instances of elliptical ties are to be found. Ellipsis is the norm for informal speech, however. The example given, (7), occurs in a popular American comic book.

Conjunction manifests semantic linkage. Conjunctive items show how sentences, clauses, and the like, are related discursively. Logical connectors like however, therefore, and attitudinal connectors such as obviously, certainly, and coordinating conjunctions like and, but, or, and even oral discursive hesitations or place savers like you know, I mean, realize conjunctive ties. See example (8).

Lexical ties carry semantic likeness or compatibility. As a local tie, lexis can be either reiteration (identical or related repetition) or collocation (relationship by association). Consider example (9).

At the surface level, language is obviously linear. While ties reflect this linearity and operate horizontally, recognizing that each utterance has retrospective and/or prospective relevance to its fellows, patterns operate vertically, reflecting the hierarchical organization of language.

Patterns are evidences of text cohesion that achieve rhetorical ends by grammatical means. Patterns focus upon the

structuring and arrangement of language material, and upon how that structuring achieves the overall rhetorical purpose.

The grammar contains constitutive rules and transformational operations that enable a writer to subordinate one idea to another. Such subordination is known as hypotaxis. Through hypotaxis, the writer reveals to the reader the cohesive and hierarchical relationships holding between/among basic propositions in a text. What is cohesively relevant to texts, however, is why, in such-and-such a context, a particular pattern is selected. Hypotactic patterns may be realized as either clauses, phrases, or words. The grammatical process of complementation furnishes those surface patterns which function as nominals; in (10) we see two examples of infinitival complementation. The relativization process permits surface patterns to function as adjectivals; in (11), two relative clauses have been reduced still further to participial phrases. Adverbial subordination allows surface patterns to function as adverbials; (12) shows an initial adverbial temporal clause.

A second category of patterns is rhetorical structure. Language material must be organized locally to effect readability and ease of processing, as well as aesthetic pleasure. Writers rarely deliver sentence tokens out-or-the-blue. Rather, the writer regulates the flow of information. This distribution of the message into topic and comment, or into old, given information (an anchor to what has preceded discursively) and new information (the elemental reason for communication) is an important facet of patterned local cohesion. In example (13), the third paragraph

begins with an orienter -- the spatial or temporal or causal focusing for the reader -- followed by the topic/given information (canonically, the congruence of the semantic agent and the syntactic subject, the information the writer presumes is discursively shared by both the writer and the reader), and then the comment/new information. Parallelism and balance are other aspects of rhetorical structure. The balance in example (14) is obvious. In poetry, rhythm and rhyme create rhetorical structure, providing a patterned framework or grid for the writer. Example (15), lines from Alexander Pope's An Essay on Criticism, illustrates poetic patterning.

The final category of surface patterns is punctuation, those conventions of writing for indicating gross intonational patterns and for visually shaping a message. As a cohesive device, punctuation is seldom noticed until it is abused. The two familiar examples in (16) show how punctuation, and its absence, distinguish non-restrictive from restrictive relative clauses.

III. SOME QUESTIONS RAISED

The classificatory diagram of textuality, presented on the first page of the Appendix, raises some practical questions for the instructor of composition.

Do flaws in global text coherence thwart reader processing and comprehension more than flaws in local text cohesion? If strategies for textuality can be categorized, and then taught,

would composition instructors be wise to handle both global and local flaws equally, or should they concentrate more fully on global text mistakes? Consider example (17), taken from a student composition. Obviously, he is a faulty pronoun reference; the clear antecedent is children. But aside from activating the red marking pencil in the same way as split infinitives and the objective case after the copula be do, is communication really thwarted in (17)? Or, is it only the composition teacher who feels uncomfortable?

It was M. Burt who, to my knowledge, first articulated the distinction between global errors and local errors. Global errors are those errors that thwart communication. She cites a sentence uttered by an adult ESL student, (18a) in the Appendix. There are five errors in the sentence, each of which, one at a time, Burt corrects, producing five different, but still ungrammatical utterances, (18 b-f). She then notes: (1975: p. 56):

The first four versions of the sentence [(18 b-e)] were judged as not having much effect on the comprehensibility of the sentence. In fact three out of four judges pointed out that, though unlikely, the speaker could have meant to say "we shouldn't take this bus. If we do, we'll be late for school." In version [(18 f)] the insertion of the connector "if" makes the speaker's original intention immediately clear, and prevents any misunderstanding. The single insertion of "if" did more to convey the speaker's intended meaning than the four other corrections combined in version [(18 g)].

The analogy, however, that I am drawing between Burt's global errors and local errors, and my global and local textuality, does not hold in full. The use of the conditional subordinating conjunction if in her (18f) is, in fact, a structural signal of hypotaxis. In my classificatory scheme, (18f) represents,

therefore, patterned local text cohesion. The bifurcation into 'global' and 'local', nevertheless, does have descriptive value.

J. Williams (1979) points out that the perception of parts is governed by the perception of wholes. The figures in (19) in the Appendix are, I believe, a fair approximation of Williams's thesis. Local errors become foregrounded reasons or causes of thwarted communication -- that is, are noticed by 'real-world' readers -- when the reader does not clearly perceive the global organizing principles of the text. Williams wonders if composition instructors and rhetoric handbooks focus too much on matters of usage isolated from or even irrelevant to coherence. Do these local usage errors really stymie comprehension? Do all dangling modifiers or ruptured parallelisms really impede communication? Their widespread occurrence argues that they do not.

Further, especially with freshmen writers and Basic English students, would instructors be wise to use ESL composition materials (advanced level, of course) in their classes? Consider again how clearly and how overtly both coherence and cohesion are marked in "The Essay of Comparison and Contrast." Certainly, marginal writers can understand the 'text-ness' of this composition much more simply and directly than that of the essays in any anthologized collection of mature and sophisticated writers.

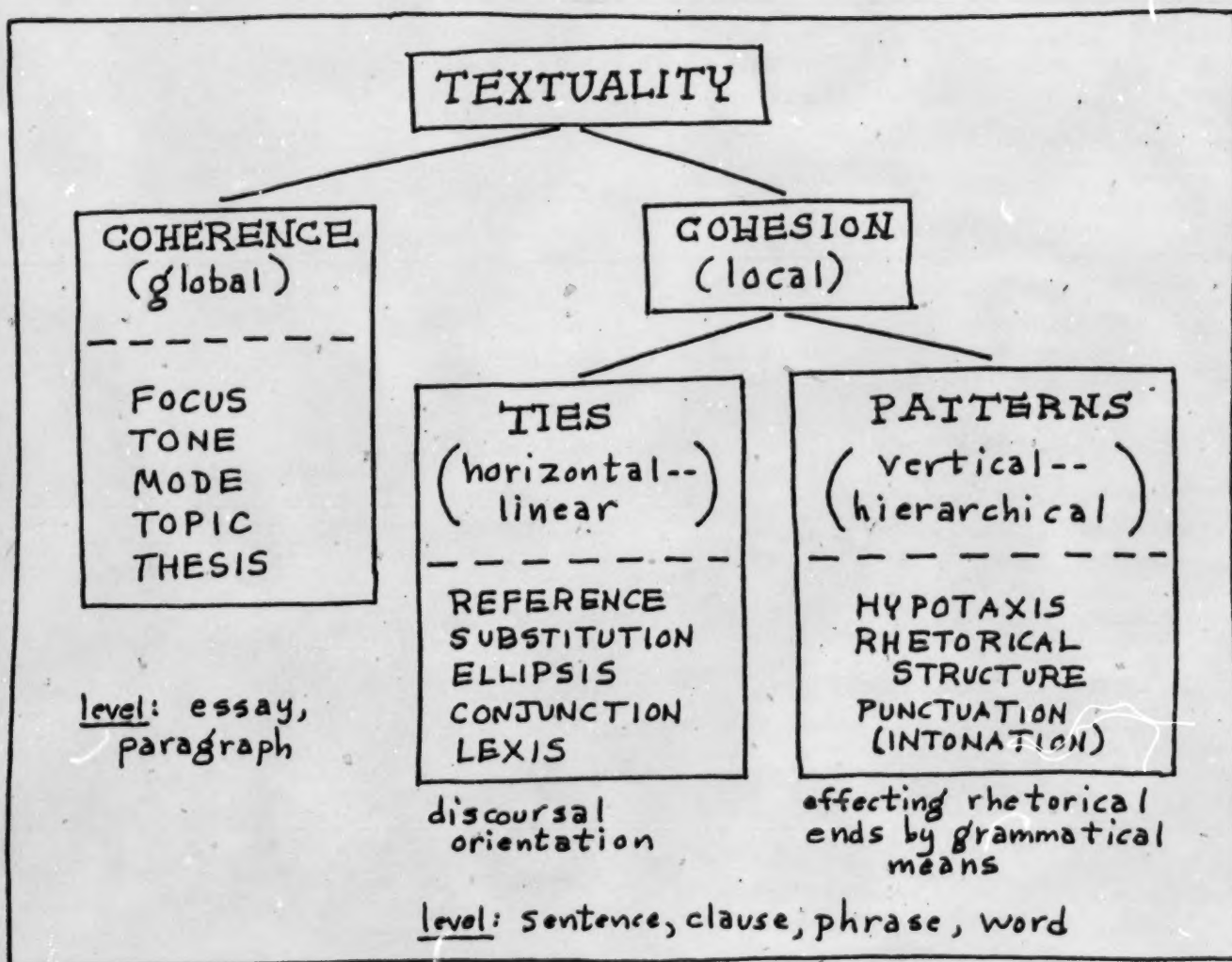
Further, how related is local text cohesion to the concept of closure? Is it related to the ease of processing of text material by the short term memory? Is readability directly related to cohesion: the more tenuous and less overt the cohesion, the less readable the text?

At the other end of the continuum, is there a measurable point at which excessive local text cohesion has a negating effect on comprehension, hampering rather than helping the reader's understanding? I am thinking here of legal documents, of insurance policies, of instructional booklets for preparing income taxes or for assembling a child's tricycle, where redundancy is purposely and intentionally built into the text.

IV. CONCLUSION

Composition teachers have always dealt with coherence and cohesion. The text heuristic, presented on the first page of the Appendix, aims at establishing a reasonable classification and definition of textuality so that problems arising in this area may be dealt with more systematically and more understandably.

APPENDIX



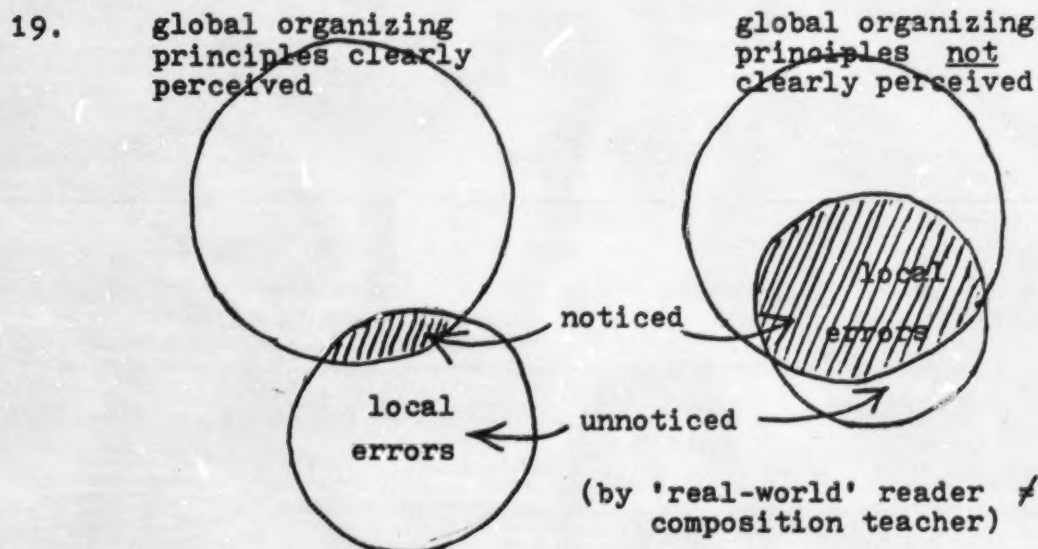
Appendix: 2

1. Colorless green ideas sleep furiously.
2. She did it.
3. "I don't know," he (a). And it is a (b) to have the grinnies, (c) uncontrollable, spontaneous state of (d). On another occasion in (e) years when his eyesight (f) really very bad, Spooner (g) himself seated next to (h) most elegant lady at (i). He's half tail and (j) feet. The crowd grew very (k), and a deep, low, (l) sigh, as of people (m) see the theatre curtain (n) up at last, breathed (o) innumerable throats. At least (p) certainly does exist, however.

(a) replied; (b) privilege; (c) an; (d) ecstasy;
 (e) later; (f) was; (g) found; (h) a; (i) dinner;
 (j) half; (k) still; (l) happy; (m) who; (n) go;
 (o) from; (p) one
4. If a high school (aa) university student were asked (bb) name the best-known English (cc), he would probably name (dd). If one asked him (ee) name the best-known Persian (ff) writer, he would probably (gg) Omar Khayyam. These writers (hh) long been popular throughout (ii) world -- Shakespeare because of (jj) many fine dramas and (kk) poems, and Omar Khayyam (ll) of the wit, beauty, (mm) philosophy of his poem, (nn) Rubaiyat.

(aa) or; (bb) to; (cc) writer; (dd) Shakespeare;
 (ee) to; (ff) Iranian; (gg) name; (hh) have; (ii) the;
 (jj) his; (kk) love; (ll) because; (mm) and; (nn) The
5. ... Firdausi had begun to write his famous Shah Nameh, or Book of Kings, which told of the glories of ancient Persian rulers. This gave the Persian people a new pride in their native culture ... (paragraph 4)
6. In contrast to Firdausi's quiet life, Chaucer's life was one of busy activity in public affairs. (paragraph 9)
7. Ox: ... Take away yer fancy costume, and then what are ya? Spider-Man: I give up -- ∅ naked?
8. In each case the native language and literature of the people were suppressed, but slowly interest in nationalist traditions began to flourish and within three hundred years after being invaded, the native language of each country began to emerge again ... (paragraph 3)
9. Scholars of Iranian literature, however, regret that people do not know more about other great Iranian writers.... Likewise, scholars of English literature feel that it would be good if people knew more about such English writers as ... (paragraph 2)

10. ... it did not greatly impress the King of Iran, who had requested him to write it and who had promised to give him a gold coin for each line he wrote. (paragraph 7)
11. ... the native language of each country began to emerge again, strengthened by literary masterpieces such as those produced by Firdausi in Iran and Chaucer in England. (paragraph 3)
12. When he finally completed the Book of Kings, it did not greatly impress the King of Iran ... (paragraph 7)
13. ... strengthened by literary masterpieces such as those produced by Firdausi in Iran and Chaucer in England.
By the middle of the tenth century [orienter], Firdausi [topic/given] had begun to write his famous Shah Nameh [comment/new] ... (paragraphs 2 and 3)
14. ... Shakespeare because of his many fine dramas and love poems, and Omar Khayyam because of the wit, beauty, and philosophy of his poem, The Rubaiyat. (paragraph 1)
15. These, equal syllables alone require,
Though oft the ear the open vowels tire,
While expletives their feeble aid do join,
And ten low words oft creep in one dull line,
While they ring round the same unvaried chimes,
With sure returns of still expected rhymes.
(Alexander Pope, An Essay on Criticism)
16. a) Children, who love poetry, are creative.
b) Children who love poetry are creative.
17. Parents must assume the responsibility of disciplining their children. If they neglect this important duty, he often becomes a disruptive factor in the classroom.
(from a student composition)
18. a) Not take this bus we late for school.
b) We not take this bus we late for school.
c) Do not take this bus we late for school.
d) Not take this bus we will late for school.
e) Not take this bus we be late for school.
f) If not take this bus we late for school.
g. We do not take this bus we will be late for school.
(M. Burt, 1975)



(suggested by J. Williams, CCCC 1979 paper)

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THE ESSAY OF COMPARISON AND CONTRAST

(1)

If a high school or university student were asked to name the best-known English writer, he would probably name Shakespeare. If one asked him to name the best-known Persian (Iranian) writer, he would probably name Omar Khayyam. These writers have long

been popular throughout the world—Shakespeare because of his many fine dramas and love poems, and Omar Khayyam because of the wit, beauty, and philosophy of his poem, *The Rubaiyat*.

(2)

An English translator of *The Rubaiyat* said

of Omar Khayyam, "He sang . . . what all men feel in their hearts, but had not expressed in verse before." Scholars of Iranian literature, however, regret that people do not know more about other great Iranian writers, such as Firdausi, Hafiz, and Jami. Likewise, scholars of English literature feel that it would be good if people knew more about such English writers as Chaucer, Milton, and Keats.

(3)

Firdausi and Chaucer each made a significant contribution to the language and literature of his country, and there is an interesting parallel in their lives and times, although they lived four hundred years apart. Just as the Iranian territories had been overrun by their neighbors about 650 A.D., so also had the English territory been overrun by outside armies in 1066 A.D. In both cases, the country remained under complete domination of a foreign power and influence for about two hundred years. In each case the na-

tive language and literature of the people were suppressed, but slowly interest in nationalist traditions began to flourish and within three hundred years after being invaded, the native language of each country began to emerge again, strengthened by literary masterpieces such as those produced by Firdausi in Iran and Chaucer in England.

(4)

By the middle of the tenth century, Firdausi had begun to write his famous *Shah Nameh*, or *Book of Kings*, which told of the glories of ancient Persian rulers. This gave the Persian people a new pride in their native culture and encouraged them to use their own language and develop their own literature. Firdausi's poems include interesting stories of queens, as well as kings, and have been translated and enjoyed by scholars in many countries. One of the stories from the *Book of Kings* was made into a beautiful English poem, *Sohrab and Rustum*, by a nineteenth century British poet.

(5)

Chaucer, writing in the last half of the fourteenth century, was able to replace the previously popular French poetry with English poetry. Although the settings for his poems were sometimes in Greece or Troy, the style and language were distinctly British. From that time on, English literature began to show new hope and vigor. Like Firdausi, Chaucer wrote for and about the nobility. But *The Canterbury Tales*, which is perhaps his greatest work, is a collection of poems about many types of Englishmen, from laborers to knights. He is considered one

of the best English storytellers of all time, and few writers have had a better understanding of human nature. Like Firdausi, he was especially clever at portraying the nature of women and showing the role they play in the affairs of nations.

(6)

In their personal lives, the careers of the two poets were quite different. Firdausi spent some time at the royal court, but once he had begun to write his great epic poem about the Persian kings, he retired to a modest residence where he lived quietly and simply, devoting thirty years of his life to transforming historical records into magnificent verse.

(7)

According to legend, Firdausi's life had a poignant ending. When he finally completed the *Book of Kings*, it did not greatly impress the King of Iran, who had requested him to write it and who had promised to give him a gold coin for each line he wrote. So the king paid him less money than he had

promised. This made Firdausi angry, and he wrote a bitter satire against the king; then, fearful for his life, he fled the country.

Appendix: 5 18

(8)

For the next ten years the poet moved from place to place, with no permanent home and very little money. Eventually the king came to appreciate Firdausi's great work and decided to pay him the full amount that he had promised him. But it was too late. Firdausi had died. The men who were bringing the treasure met those who were carrying the body of the great poet to its final resting place.

(9)

In contrast to Firdausi's quiet life, Chaucer's life was one of busy activity in public affairs. He spent much time at court and served in a number of government positions, making several trips of a diplomatic nature to France and Italy. But at the same time he was active as a poet. He knew several languages, and from his extensive reading and travels got many ideas for poems. Like Firdausi, though, he suffered adversity in his later years. Perhaps he lived too well and gave too little thought to his personal affairs. At any rate, he was often in financial difficulty, and the latter part of his life was not very happy.

(10)

Firdausi and Chaucer lived in different countries and in different periods of history. Each one, however, inherited a love and pride of country that could not be crushed, and each is considered the father of modern literature in his country.

BLOCK I topic/thesis

(1)
introduction
(2)
restriction
(3)
thesis -- parallels

BLOCK II literature: comparison

(4)
Firdausi
(5)
Chaucer

BLOCK III personal lives activity: contrast

(6)	Firdausi	(9a)	Chaucer
(7)	Firdausi	(9b)	Chaucer
(8)	Firdausi		

end: comparison
BLOCK IV conclusion

contrast & comparison

W. Bryce Van Syoc and Florence
S. Van Syoc, Let's Learn Eng-
lish: Advanced Course; Book 6,
1971, pp. 320-322

Appendix: 6